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SUBJECT: NIGERIA CUSTOMS BRIEFED PRIOR TO U.S. VISIT JUNE 15-19, [2009](#).

Ref: Sanders-Silski-Piasek emails of April 28-29, 2009

¶1. (U) Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) Comptroller General Mr. Bernard Nwadialo and two Assistant Comptroller Generals of Customs visited Embassy Abuja on June 4, 2009 to make a courtesy call on the Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission and to inform the Mission of the purpose of their upcoming trip to United States from June 15-19, 2009. The Comptroller General (CG) and 6 members of his staff (NCS Delegation) will visit two busy U.S. ports in Miami and Houston and hold high level meetings with officials of the State Department, the U.S. Customs Service, and the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Washington D.C.

¶2. (U) Nwadialo has reached out to the USG to assist his agency to implement effective cargo inspection methods and to help them to develop closer collaboration with other agencies at the ports. INL Abuja has been exploring ways to assist the NCS to improve port security and increase the interdiction of narcotics in collaboration with the Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA). INL/AAE and AF/W have been reviewing INL assistance to Nigeria and have urged the Mission in refel to pre-brief the NCS Delegation coming to the U.S. and de-brief them after their visit to discuss possible follow-on activities.

¶3. (U) According to the CG, the NCS is self-funded and retains 7% of the total revenues generated and duties collected by the organization. NCS does not receive any budgetary allocations from the Nigerian Federal Government. He added that the NCS has been undergoing reforms and modernization for the past 20-30 years of its existence in its bid to provide more efficient service to clients while collecting the maximum amount of duties due. The CG confirmed that, although the NCS is primarily tasked with revenue generation, he deems that enforcement is a very critical factor in improving trade facilitation. In fact, he noted that, because the NCS has a long and comprehensive list of prohibited items, he is particularly interested in seeing how the United States efficiently balances the need for strict enforcement on the importation of such items while facilitating trade at the same time. NCS, he explained, would like to establish a maximum clearance time of 72 hours for shipments at the ports. To accomplish this, the CG indicated that NCS has acquired new software that should improve clearance times and proceeds at the ports by implementing an E-payment system to enable capturing all payments. He noted that the system is not perfect and some fraudsters have been able to exploit some of these flaws.

¶4. (U) The CG stated that the trip to the United States will enable him and the NCS Delegation to better understand why the reforms they have adopted in the past years have not achieved the desired goal of port decongestion and operational effectiveness. The CG notes that capacity building is the NCS' most important priority currently. He believes that Information Communication Technology (ICT) at Nigerian ports and land borders must imperatively be improved along with Human Capital Development. To this end, NCS is investing heavily into building its technological infrastructure and building a training center to develop the skills of its employees particularly those in management positions.

¶ 15. (U) The CG also underscored that the NCS requires technical assistance in procedures and enforcement at the ports. He noted the need to have Nigerian customs laws reviewed as they are antiquated and has initiated proceedings in the Senate to have such laws amended. The CG confirmed that the NCS also requires assistance at the airports for the effective inspection of cargo. Finally, he added that the NCS is keen on learning more about effective border management because Nigeria has vast borders which are quite porous and challenging to manage, particularly because it is difficult to distinguish Nigerian Nationals from others living at the borders as people can move freely back and forth, have the same physical appearance and speak the same languages.

¶ 16. (U) INL concluded the meeting by briefing the NCS Delegation on their scheduled meetings in Washington and the tours of Miami and Houston ports which will be facilitated by Customs Border Patrol (CBP) and INL Washington. The 7 member NCS Delegation will arrive in D.C. on Sunday, June 14, 2009; have meetings at the State Department on Monday June 15; travel to Miami on the same day; tour Miami ports on Tuesday June 16; travel to Houston to tour the ports; depart Houston on Thursday June 18 for D.C.; have an out brief session with State Department officials; and depart June 19, 2009 for Nigeria.

SANDERS